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adjustment, but they can facilitate the working of economic laws determining industrial remuneration. The adjustment of wages cannot be done mechanically; it demands the unremitting exercise of intelligence. This is the condition of fair adjustment of wages under the rapidly shifting conditions which prevail throughout the industrial world. Any mechanical arrangement must inhibit the free exercise of intelligent discretion, where such an arrangement is at all regarded; in emergency it is, in fact, apt to be disregarded.

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JOHN CUMMINGS.

*Organized Labor: Its Problems, Purposes and Ideals, and the Present and Future of the American Wage Earner.* By JOHN MITCHELL. Philadelphia: American Book and Bible House, 1903. 8vo, pp. xii + 436.

*Le syndicalisme anglais: résumé historique (1792 1902).* By F. FAGNOT. Paris: Société nouvelle de Librairie et d'Édition (Librairie Georges Bellais), 1903. 12mo, pp. 116.

IN *Organized Labor* one finds a good statement of the program of unionism and of the practical issues raised in the industrial world by labor organization. The book gives evidence of "thought and careful consideration" of labor problems; although it is not true that the work is "not that of a theorist or of a doctrinaire," for that is exactly what the writer of this book is. His doctrine or theory is, of course, trade-unionism, and he has written his book to justify his theory, after the manner of theorists and doctrinaires the world over. If nothing more is intended in the above-quoted statement, however, than that he is not a scientific investigator, not a recluse, nor a scholar, but a man of affairs, no exception need be taken, and it is certainly no discredit to the author of *Organized Labor* that he is a man in high authority in the trade-union world, although it does follow, that the work under consideration is not a scientific treatise. An impartially scientific account of unionism could hardly issue from the president of one of the most powerful unions in the country.

The historical matter in Mr. Mitchell's book is drawn from a few well-known general treatises, and the several short chapters devoted to historical treatment give one an interesting, if unoriginal, résumé of the history of the labor movement in the United States

and in general — the sort of thing that Mr. Mitchell might have had done for him at a fair price; and while this portion is perhaps least deserving of careful consideration, it certainly is not without value for those readers (they are likely to be many) who are unfamiliar with labor literature. The writer gives ample evidence that he is a well-informed advocate, and that he knows how to get the case for unionism well stated.

The ease with which all arguments against unionism are rebutted is significant; the case for unionism is always well put and convincingly, and the whole tissue of superficial criticisms preferred against labor organizations is swept away without difficulty, as witness, for example, the following paragraph to prove that unionism does not level wages *down* but *up*:

As a matter of actual practice, it must be conceded that in many cases the great majority of men at a given trade or operation receive the minimum wages demanded. The reason of this, however, is the unwillingness of the employer to pay, and not the unwillingness of the men to accept, a higher wage. If a manufacturer is employing men with the right to engage and discharge them, he is probably not losing money on the laziest, least skilful, and least efficient man to whom he is paying the standard rate. If that is the case, it is probable that he is finding the labor of the most industrious and most skilled worker very profitable, and nothing in the rules of the union prevents him from giving a portion of this gain to the skilled workman in the form of an addition to his wages. (P. 241.)

The underlying assumption here, that the standard rate of wages fixed by the union represents the earning capacity of the laziest and least efficient workman, will not be generally conceded outside the ranks of unionism, and is, in fact, contrary to trade-union theory itself. It may be suggested, moreover, that when a powerful organization has forced wages up to the highest notch where they can be made to stick temporarily — and to do this is the program of every powerful union — it may very well be something more than “unwillingness” on the part of an employer that keeps him from paying all but the poorest and laziest workman higher wages still. In a sense it may be true that no employer will keep men employed at losing rates of wages; but this is not at all in the sense in which Mr. Mitchell implies. An employer may pay many of his men wages which exceed their earning capacity, and when he does so — *i. e.*, pays some of his men more than they are worth — he does not necessarily lose by the transaction, nor in the long run, after adjustments have been

effected, is he likely to lose. For he may and does recoup himself easily from one or both of two sources: (1) he may take it out of the public in higher prices, that is to say, out of labor in general, or (2) out of his more efficient workmen, that is, out of labor in particular. These more efficient men might earn wages considerably above the standard rate, if they were not forced to carry their inefficient, "lazy" brethren. This is a naïve justification of unionism to say the least of it, and withal a familiar one. It is, of course, not the employer, but the efficient workman, who loses to the "lazy," inefficient man, enabling him to go on indefinitely in his laziness and inefficiency without suffering any diminution in wages. If unionism could free itself of these intestinal parasites—who, it should be noted, are most active in fomenting needless irritation, and who bring unionism into disrepute by inducing a nervous tension that results in slugging, riot, and general lawlessness—its power for ameliorating the condition of wage-earners would be tremendously increased.

On the whole, Mr. Mitchell's discussion of the main issues raised by the program and practices of organized labor during the last few years is characterized by a sanity, sincerity, and, with due allowance for the author's sympathies and affiliations, a highly commendable degree of fairness. The case for unionism has received excellent and dignified statement. If the account of it given has been somewhat idealized, it is nevertheless a fine declaration of high purposes, by one who himself stands for what is best and noblest in unionism; and it is most encouraging that such men as John Mitchell are formulating to so great an extent as they are, the policy of organized labor. For the economist, as for the general reader, chief interest attaches to discussions of present issues, and to descriptive accounts of labor conditions, more particularly in the coal fields. It is no discredit to the author that his account of unionism does not tally with that which one gets out of the daily papers.

M. FAGNOT's résumé of English trade-union history is a condensation of the familiar account of it by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. As the Webbs' book has been translated into French, the excuse for Mr. Fagnot's brochure seems to lie in the fact that he has condensed the original history into 115 small pages, for the benefit, it is presumed, of the French socialistic public, which is too preoccupied to undertake a perusal of the original account, or too indigent to

procure a copy of it. Needless to say, the résumé is well done — M. Fagnot is a Frenchman!

J. C.

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*Le compagnonage: son histoire, ses coutumes, ses règlements, et ses rites.* Par E. MARTIN SAINT-LÉON. Paris: Armand Colin, 1901. 12mo, pp. xxviii + 374.

THE passing of a great human institution is always of vital significance. It may be national in extent, and yet, in its effects or in its lessons for posterity, of far wider importance. Such an institution is *compagnonage*. For many centuries the *compagnon* was a powerful factor in the life of France, but it was as part and parcel of the third estate. History almost wholly ignored him. Literature — after the lapse of a long period — discovered in him a picturesque figure.

During four hundred years the secret organization of the laboring class in France has been known as *compagnonage*. In a style interesting in spite of some few mannerisms, M. Saint-Léon traces its story through the legendary period, its probable beginning in the Middle Ages when artisans gathered in large communities around the cathedrals in process of erection, its historic origin in the opening of the sixteenth century, its training of members and struggles with masters and government, down to its lingering death in the present day. As the trade corporation from the time of the fifteenth century became more and more exclusively a union of patrons, the need of association for self-help and self-protection grew more pressing among journeymen. The ambitious artisan never lightly gave over the *tour de France*. Traveling from one town to another to perfect his professional education through employment in many shops and under different masters, lingering longest where the methods seemed to him superior, his recurring want, among strangers, of friends, shelter, food, and work was undoubtedly a primary cause of the rise of that "brotherhood" which everywhere assured him a home in the hostelry common to fellow-members, a "mother" in its hostess, care in sickness, and immediate help in obtaining a favorable position. For the young workman just freed from his apprenticeship the *tour de France* afforded a graduate course of instruction. "In many trades," as M. Saint-Léon affirms, "one could not be reputed a good workman, an expert artisan in his calling, unless he had accomplished this pilgrimage." (P. 224.)